Advanced Meter Infrastruture (AMI) Project

Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is the City of Georgetown's Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) Project?
The Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) Project is a program created to enhance The City's electric and water system as well as provide the City and its customers with the data and tools necessary to better manage their energy consumption and costs.

The system is designed to deliver electricity and water from suppliers to consumers using two-way digital communications. Its purpose is to save energy, reduce costs and increase reliability. We will be replacing your existing electric and water meter with an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meter. The meters will allow the City to read your meters remotely and give the City better tools to manage energy usage, increase reliability, and provide enhanced customer service.

How will it benefit customers?
The AMI project will empower customers by having near real-time information, flexibility of billing due dates and historical review of energy usage.

How will it benefit The City of Georgetown?
The City's electric and water systems will be enhanced by using technology that will ultimately anticipate and respond to system disturbances/outages. The technology will also provide tools necessary to manage demand and create efficiencies that will improve service.

Long Term Benefits

- **Reliability:** When the electric and water meters are fully installed, we'll be able to prevent many outages before they occur, and restore service faster when they do occur.
- **Convenience:** Availability to read your meter without visiting your property monthly, but may need occasional access for routine maintenance.
- **Affordability:** Long term, our investments in this technology will help us achieve efficiencies throughout the electrical and water infrastructure.
- **Environment:** In the future, this technology will help us bring more renewable energy to the grid and encourage more widespread energy conservation.

Components of the System
Electric and Water Meters - The meters serve as the point of communication between customers and utilities providing accurate consumption data, outage information, as well as system engineering data.

Communication Infrastructure
The meters communicate to the City digitally by using small, low powered radios to send the information securely to the City.

When will this project start?
The City has contracted and partnered with Cooper Power Systems and Vanguard Utility Services to begin installing electric meters in October of 2012, with waters meters to be replaced in November of 2012. The installers will carry identification and will travel in marked vehicles.

You will receive notification via a letter from the City when utility personnel will be in your neighborhood to install your new meters. Door hangers will be placed on your door if the meter was not changed and give you options to reschedule the meter change out.

When will the project be completed?
The project is scheduled to be completed by January 2013.

Did the City look at other options before choosing a meter automation system?
Yes we did. In 2011 we reviewed two options moving forward with our electric system, staying with the current system or moving towards a meter automation system. No other option provided the benefits that a meter automation system does. Our goal is to provide better customer service and provide tools to our customers so they can make decisions with regard to their utility use to fit their lifestyle.

Can a customer opt-out of the meter automation project?
Currently, our project is structured so that every customer will receive a new meter. We encourage you to contact the electric or water utility department if you have questions regarding your new meters by calling (843) 545-4554.

Will I have to pay for the new meters?
No, there is no cost to you for the meter replacement.

Are customer rates going up?
Currently the rates are going to stay the same. You will probably notice a slight change in your energy and water usage. Also, energy prices are increasing industry-wide. We believe that the tools associated with the meter automation project will allow the city to manage its purchase of electricity and water.

Will the change in meters affect the customer payment date?
Customer billing cycles will not change due to this project. However, the AMI system will allow the City to be more flexible in billing due dates.

Will the electric rates change to block structure?
No, currently the City does not charge for different electricity and water prices depending on the time periods in which the energy or water is consumed.

Are you going to start billing for on/off-peak use?
The City does not currently have an On-Peak/Off-Peak rate structure in place for residential customers at this time. However, the technology associated with the new meter automation system would allow the City to notify customers when they would be using on/off-peak electricity in the future.

Will I be informed if there is a problem with my electric system or a water leak?
The new system will allow both the electric and water departments to monitor each meter daily. This will allow the City to troubleshoot the meter prior to sending out a repair crew and inform you of any issues related to your meter. This will also reduce costs.

Outages
If you experience and outage, please call the City at 843-545-4600. The new system will allow the City to verify the outage and get you restored as quickly as possible.

Disconnect/Reconnect
The new AMI system will allow the City to disconnect or reconnect some of our electric meters remotely without visiting the customer location. If you are disconnected for nonpayment, please call our utility billing or customer service representatives at (843) 545-4039 or (843) 545-4044 to arrange payment and reconnection.

How will the City of Georgetown use the information collected from the new meters?
The meter automation project will provide accurate system consumption data that will greatly enhance our ability to design and efficiently operate our electric and water distribution system.

Will everyone get a water meter?
Yes, but not at the same time as the electric meter due to the equipment delivery and installation schedules.

Security & Customer Privacy

What are we doing to protect customer information?
The City of Georgetown has always worked diligently to ensure the safety of customer data. We have a Cyber Security Plan which identifies the security measures the City is taking to guarantee customer data stays secure and private.

If there is a system failure, is there a back-up system in place?
Yes. The new system will have redundancy measures in place.

If the system is hacked, what information can be obtained?
The system and data within is encrypted in accordance with standards set forth by the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST). Should the system ever be compromised, the only information accessible is energy consumption data. No personal information will be accessible.

Does the City have the ability to view individual data?
We currently have the ability to view individual customer consumption data on a daily basis which is needed for billing purposes. The new system will take hourly reads versus monthly reads of consumption information, which will provide more detailed consumption history to customers, as well as allow us to better manage our electric system and engineer and plan for future system improvements.

What is the radio frequency of AMI meters?
The new meters will contain similar technology to the City of Georgetown's existing meters. Both existing and newly installed meters fall within the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) safety regulations.

How often will the meters transmit data?
Current meters are read once a month for billing purposes. The new meters will be read every hour.

Where do I get updates on the project?
www.cogsc.com/meterproject

Where do I call if I have further questions?
The number to call for additional information is (843) 545-4554.